Allentown Bethlehem Easton's Atari Computer Enthusiasts'

Hardcopy

July 1987

ABE's ACE's AND EXPO APPEAR IN ATARI EXPLORER MAGAZINE

A look at the Eastern Pennsylvania Atari Expo— now we know how it should be done

User Friendly

By BETSY STAPLES

I have been attending computer shows for close to a decade now, and I can honestly say that I have never seen one better organized or more carefully planned than the Eastern Pennsylvania Atari Expo that took place in Allentown, PA, this spring.

If your user group has not yet held an Expo, listen up, and I'll tell you what ABE'S ACEs did right—from an exhibitor's point of view anyway.

Without a doubt, the most unusual aspect of the show was the venue. The Eastern Pennsylvania Atari Expo was held in a very pleasant, pint-sized Hilton Hotel in the heart of downtown Allentown—only a mile or so from a major highway, surrounded by inexpensive parking facilities, an easy walk from reasonably priced restaurants.

What's so unusual about that? Nothing really, except that I had never before attended a show held in a hotel, and I liked the idea of being able to pop up to my room to change shoes or walk around the corner to get a decent meal.

I have exhibited at shows in convention centers, gymnasiums, cafeterias, and parking garages, but never have I been so *comfortable*. Usually, the show floor is blocks, if not miles, from the nearest hotel, and most are completely isolated, leaving attendees and exhibitors at the mercy of the "convention services" operator for all amenities. Have you ever had the misfortune to try one of their $4.50 hot dogs? Or how about the barbecued beef that is served with neither knife nor fork?

All this is by way saying that if you can find a nice hotel with a suitable room for your show, your exhibitors will love you, and some of the showgoers might be appreciative as well.

Shirley Bickert and Ralph Fenner, hard-working leaders of ABE's ACEs.

About Your Booth . . .

Another thing the Pennsylvania group did right was to include in the price of a booth everything most exhibitors need—no extra charges for furniture, draping, signs, or electricity. This is a much classier approach than presenting potential exhibitors with a laundry list of irritating extras.

And everything was in place when we arrived. I don't know what the situation was on Friday night when setup officially began, but when we arrived on Saturday morning, our booth was ready, club members were stationed around the area to provide help where needed, and all we had to do was open a few cartons and set out our wares. What a pleasure!

Shortly after we arrived, a large bouquet of helium-filled Atari balloons was delivered and tied to our booth, lending a festive air to the exhibit area.

The club had solicited door prizes from various vendors prior to the show, and Ralph Fenner, who was in charge of exhibit sales, periodically read the winning numbers over the public address system. His announcements were appropriate in number and content, if a tad loud.

How Public Is Your Public Address?

Which brings me to my next bit of advice: try to keep announcements to a minimum—in both number and volume. Don't turn the microphone over to the club clown for the weekend and assume that all 500 people in the room will enjoy his clever quips and Crazy Eddie imitation; more than likely, exhibitors and attendees alike will be longing to offer the fellow a microphone sandwich by the time Saturday lunch rolls around.

Take a lesson from Ralph: keep announcements short and concise and make them only when necessary. And do check the volume; most convention hall PA systems are capable of delivering many more db than the average Atarian's ears and brain need for accurate information processing. Remember, a whisper is a far better attention-getter than a shout.

Seeking Publicity

Some combination of ABE's ACEs and Atari's public relations agency managed to get some impressive media coverage of the Expo. There was at least one TV crew on hand Saturday afternoon, and the Sunday edition of the local paper featured a story and photograph on the front page.

Editor's Staples and Johnsonbaugh scan the Atari Explorer booth.

That's the way to do it, of course—arrange for the media coverage to run while the show is in progress. A story on page 6 of Monday's paper will make a nice keepsake and will net the club exactly zero dollars. So try to arrange for interested press people to visit the show early—maybe even Friday evening if you plan to begin setup then.

Regarding advance publicity, Sandi Austin says that posters have proved to be the most cost-effective form of advertisement. She recommends that clubs blanket the area from which they hope to draw attendees with large, professional-looking (try to avoid notebook paper and crayon) posters.

And don't overlook the potential of your own BBS and newsletter. The first people we talked to at the Allentown Expo were from Richmond, VA, and about three quarters of the subscribers we signed up at the show were from states other than Pennsylvania. How did they find out about an event so far from home? Probably—directly or indirectly—through a newsletter exchange.

So there you have a few hints and personal observations that I hope will make your Atari Expo more enjoyable and more profitable for all concerned. If those of you who have already held shows have additional tips, please write and let us know, we'll try to publish them here to help others. ■

You've Come A Long Way, Atari

You've come a long way, Atari, from the days when the only female folks at your user meetings were little girls whose regular babysitters were unavailable.

Now, Atari, you can look with pride at a groups like ABE's ACEs that has not only a substantial female constituency but a woman president.

Far from the stereotypical sexless nerd that was once thought to be the backbone of "computer clubs," Shirley Bickert is an attractive, efficient mother of three who has been involved with computers for only about two years.

She first became interested in learning to use the family Atari when her three-year old daughter wanted to use it. She asked her husband for guidance but found that taking computing lessons from one's spouse is only slightly less dangerous than taking driving lessons from one's spouse.

Not wishing to jeopardize her marriage, Shirley turned to ABE's ACEs. When she first started to attend meetings, she was one of only three women in the group, and she soon discovered that they were all there for the same reason; they were looking for a dispassionate third party to teach them what they needed to know about their computers.

Before long, Shirley had formed a Women's SIG with about two dozen members, and soon they were all hard at work learning the basics from other people's husbands. Since then, the Women's SIG has become the Beginners' SIG and fills, Shirley feels, a great need in the local Atari community.

Shirley has graduated from the Beginners' SIG and is now one of the few women presidents of Atari user groups. Her family's commitment to Atari hardware has grown as her involvement has increased, and the Bickert household now includes Atari 400, 600XL, 800, 1200XL, and 520ST computers.

We congratulate Shirley and all the other ABE's ACEs who worked to make the Eastern Pennsylvania Atari Expo a smashing success. ■

User Group Directory—Are You Listed?

You asked for it, but you're not going to get it unless you give us some help.

To date, only about 50 of the 500 or so user groups that Atari believes are in existence have responded to our call for information to be published in a User Group Directory.

We could just publish Atari's list of names and addresses, but we think it would be desirable to include additional information about each club. So we're going to give you one more chance.

Would those of you who have not already done so please designate one person in your user group to send us the following information about your group:

1. Full name and acronym.
2. Address.
3. Name of president.
4. Name of membership chairperson.
5. Frequency of meetings.
6. Location of meetings.
7. A phone number for prospective members to call for verification of meeting times/dates and other information.
8. Dues.
9. Does the group publish a newsletter? If so, give name and frequency.
10. Does the group maintain a BBS? If so, provide details.
11. Approximate number of members.
12. Anything else you think we should know.

Compile this information in legible form (please don't just send your newsletter) and mail it as soon as possible to:

User Friendly
Atari Explorer
7 Hilltop Rd.
Mendham, NJ 07945

This is your last chance to win fame, fortune, and new members. ■

Atari Fair Schedule

Rosemont, IL
SCAT, LCACE and CLAUG
July 25-26, 1987
Ramada Hotel O'Hare

Detroit, MI
MAGIC, Genesee Atari Group, ST User Group
August 29-30, 1987
Southfield Civic Center

Glendale, CA
ACENET
September 19-20, 1987
Glendale Civic Auditorium

Worcester, MA
Boston Computer Society Atari SIG
September 26-27, 1987 (tentative)
Worcester Centrum

Washington, DC
NOVATARI
October 17, 1987

Palm Beach, FL
Atari Club of the Palm Beaches
November 21-22, 1987

San Jose, CA
December 5-6, 1987

For further information, contact Sandi Austin, Atari Corp, 1196 Borregas Ave, Sunnyvale, CA 94086, (408) 745-2012.

EDITORIAL

The new year for ABE's ACEs has only just begun, and already it looks like it's going to be a banner year for the club. We have all sorts of new things going on, primarily as a result of a motivated executive board. Most of the e-board members this year are full of new ideas to make their part of the club work better.

But, I must give credit where it is most due. One of the main reasons we have such a "motivated" e-board is because of our new president. He is asking, and receiving, more out the other members of the board than you would normally expect. He quite rightly employs the philosophy that, if you don't want to do the e-board job right, make room for someone who does. Now, Dennis is taking a little bit of a risk in using this approach because, quite frankly, there were NOT a whole lot of people fighting to get on this year's election ballot. It would prove hard to replace an e-board member this year due to a minor plague of apathy within the club. HOWEVER, we do have a good group of people on the board -- they all seem willing to put out that little bit extra to change a declining club into a great club once again.

With these thoughts in mind, you can see how this "motivation" is going to manifest itself within the club. We will be having meetings that will be worthwhile to attend this year! Meetings are being planned MONTHS (not days) in advance. Meeting topics are being chosen carefully to involve both 8 and 16 bit users. Guest speakers are being sought actively. No good idea is being left untried. We have an example of this in the contest. Here we have some REAL prizes (that is, prizes worth striving for) and the contest is a breeze to enter. Look elsewhere in this issue for details on rules and prizes.

This newsletter is another example of the board's willingness to try new ideas. We have the first really NEW editor (me) in years trying to crank out six (or more) good issues. We are also taking a shot at new technology by using DESKTOP PUBLISHING for production, rather than the old scissors and glue method. I, personally, think it's about time we used this wonderful contraption called the ATARI to increase our publishing productivity. By computerizing the newsletter, we should be able to improve its contents by allowing more time to be devoted to writing instead of cutting. We've had a bit of a rocky start, but I believe this is the best approach.

I've taken the liberty of instituting a few of my own ideas in this newsletter. Each issue will have an editorial (of course), a president's column, and another e-board member's column. This new column will be called "On Board," and will allow a different member of the board to express his opinions on whatever topic he wishes. This will allow the general membership to better understand the people who are running the show. Also, as stated at the July meeting, I am looking for letters to the editor. Anything on your mind lately? What about that stupid thing ATARI Corp. did this time? What about that great new product you saw? How about them METS? Just send it on in to the club address labeled: ATTN: Editor, and I'll certainly get it. I'm trying to stimulate some active dialog in these pages. We're also still running classified ads free to any club member.

That's all for now. Keep those articles coming, and don't forget to start attending those general meetings again, it could prove quite profitable!

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

The July 11th meeting went just about as we, the new E-Board, had hoped. A good club/Atari news section, questions and answers, a semi-pro presentation on home control with the Atari, home control information sheets and a great door prize, the X-10 POWERHOUSE computer interface. In addition, several new library disks for both 8 and 16-bit systems were on sale for $3 each. We even had air conditioning to beat the 90+ summer heat.

It was announced that we will hold our second annual ATARI SAFARI at the August 8th meeting. (This one will be air conditioned also.) As was the case last year, the SAFARI will be held in the college cafeteria (doors open at 1PM and the SAFARI will run until 3:30). This year, you will have a chance to see, and even work with, a wide range of programs on both 8 and 16-bit Atari systems. Don't miss this year's ATARI SAFARI.

Another announcement was made at the July 11th meeting. Details of what members of the club have to do in order to have a chance to win the new super contest we announced in the "spaceman" flyer. Here's all you have to do. 1) Attend any three meetings between September and December 1987. 2) Write something for the club's newsletter on any Atari or club-related subject. The story must be an original and must be between 500 and 1000 words long. Get yours to our editor, Chris Scullion by the December meeting AT THE LATEST. See the last page of this newsletter for information on how to get your story to Chris.

That's all you have to do. Show up three times and write something for your newsletter. If you do those two things, your name will be put in the hat and you'll have a shot at the super prizes when the winners are picked at random during our January 1988 meeting. Unlike the billion-to-one shot you normally have at winning a free Mcsoda during a burger contest, I figure your chances here are more like one in fifty of walking home with an ST system or 20 meg hard drive or one of the other prizes.

In other news, the club HOTLINE has a new number, (215) 759-3336 and will always have the latest information about the general meetings, SIGS, guest speakers and so on. This is a voice (answering machine) line so you don't need a modem or any special equipment to call it. Well, you do need a phone.

The club's HELP KEY BBS is now running the latest version of Michtron's software and has a 20 meg hard drive to hold the hundreds of public domain programs for both the 8-bit and ST computers. In addition, we've added a call forwarding station for our members to the north and west of Allentown so that they will no longer have to call long distance to utilize the BBS. A completely revised instruction booklet and quick reference card have been printed for the BBS. Just ask for your copy at any meeting.

A lot's going to be happening this year at ABE's ACEs. We hope you'll be part of it. After all, the more the merrier.

ON BOARD

with John Slaby

I joined this club over 4 years ago so I could talk with other people that also enjoyed playing/using the ATARI computer. At that time it was the excellent slide shows that Dennis John did that convinced me this was a group worth belonging to. As I grew to know more of the members I also realized that the interaction available at the meeting was also valuable and made belonging worthwhile. It also lead to more personalized interaction after the meetings.

We lost some, but by no means all, of this interaction two years ago with the move to the college. Since something was lost last year we attempted to recapture it with Sig-Night. This was mainly to benefit the eight bit users as the ST Sig was doing well. Of the three I managed to attend one was fantastic the other two were flops. We have one more scheduled before it probably fades away forever. For this loss I blame the general membership. This was your chance to show off or bring in software/hardware that you were having trouble with and hopefully get an answer on the spot. Having done a lot of troubleshooting I know this is the best way. The verbal descriptions, like those in the monthly general meeting, tend to always leave something critical out. Also it seemed at the two flops that almost all the handful of people that showed came to be entertained only and not to participate. This is strange since a computer requires interaction to do anything.

Games don't play themselves and word processors don't write letters by themselves. User groups should be the same way. That's why I find it disappointing that these people didn't bring anything to demo or something they were having problems using or even have questions so they could learn something new. I considered these to be the main purposes behind Sig-Night. To put it in one word its SHARE. No one is an expert at everything and everyone is an expert at something. It doesn't have to be programing. Becoming proficient at using a program makes you an expert and tricks you learned can benefit the group as a whole.

It isn't that hard to share at Sig-Night. It's certainly easier at the general meeting where your up in front of everyone, but even there it isn't that bad. You as the audience are very generous. Even to boring speakers like me.

If the Sig-Night this month is the last, then it will go out with a whimper, not a bang, and you only have yourselves to blame.

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Here is a list of the next few meeting dates. Be sure to mark your calendars!

August 8, 1987 (Cafeteria)
September 12, 1987 (Theater)
October 10, 1987 (Theater)
November 14, 1987 (Theater)
December 12, 1987 (Cafeteria)

At the August 8th meeting we will be holding another ATARI SAFARI. There will be lots of computers on display, showing all the latest in ATARI software and hardware. You will be able to take a peek at the club's BBS in operation and see the club newsletter being produced using Publishing Partner. There'll be lots more to see and do. See you then!

!!! CONTEST !!!

ABE's ACES is having a CONTEST! Not just any contest, no sir. This one's got real prizes! NOT a free year's membership. NOT a free library disk. NOT a veg-o-matic. Just take a look at these:

FIRST PRIZE	An ATARI 520 ST monochrome system OR A 20 Mbyte hard disk drive
SECOND PRIZE	An AVATEX 1200 baud modem
THIRD PRIZE	A $50 gift certificate to GEMINI

All you have to do to enter is attend three general club meetings between September and December (inclusive) and submit an original article to the newsletter (500 to 1000 words). It's that simple!

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MEMOREX DS/DD FLIP'N FILE W/20	22
MODEMS	
ATARI XM 301	39
AVATEX 1200hc	135

Treasurer's Report
April - July 17

Income Items

CURNT NOTE	119.00
DISK SALES	677.00
EXPO	2671.85
MEMBERSHIP	510.00
MICS.	25.00
NEWS. ADS	105.00
RAFFLE	85.00
VENDER FEE	16.00
Total:	4208.85

Expense Items

CLUB BBS'S	129.75
CURNT NOTE	119.00
EQUIPMENT	40.80
HOT LINE	85.73
LIBRARY	222.50
MEET/EXPEN	12.00
MEET/HALL	225.00
MEMBERSHIP	554.46
MICS. EXP.	26.50
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NEWSLETTER	454.28
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PROMOTION	99.90
Total:	2207.18

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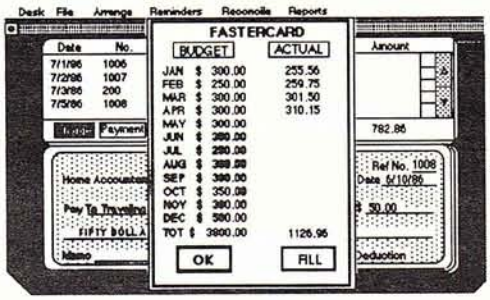

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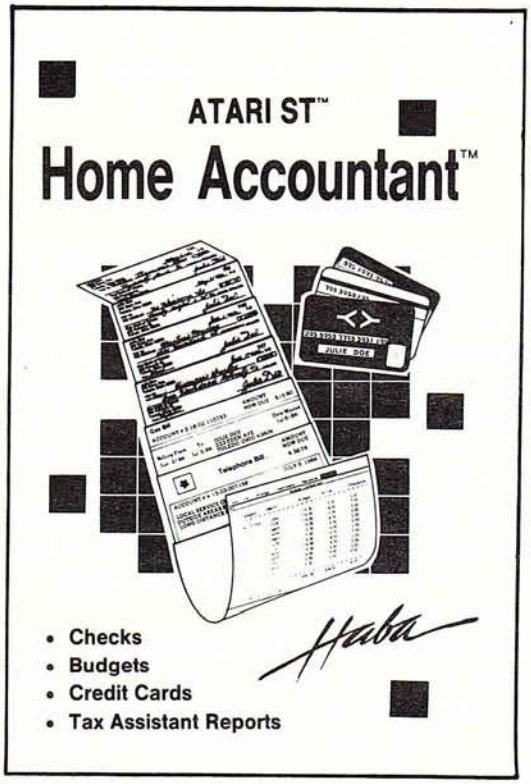

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ABE's ACEs

Allentown Bethlehem Easton's Atari Computer Enthusiasts is an independent user group organized and run by owners of Aari Computers. Atari is a trademark of Atari Corp.; all references should be so noted.

If you would like more information about ABE's ACEs, write us at the club's address or call the club Hotline at the number listed below.

Newsletter

This newsletter is published by ABE's ACEs on a bi-monthly basis (six issues per year). Opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the author and not ABE's ACEs. All unsigned articles should be attributed to the Editor. This newsletter is provided free to our membership and on an exchange basis to other user groups. Original articles from our newsletter may be reprinted in other newsletters provided credit is given to both author and source.

Submissions to the newsletter may be made via the Help Key II, at the general meetings, or by mail to the club's P.O. Box. For more information, leave messages on the Help Key II or call the club Hotline.

Special Projects

Ralph A. Fenner ---------- (215) 868-6459

Executive Committee

President	Dennis John (215) 759-8151
Vice-President	Leon Bonam (215) 266-1512
Secretary	Curtis Lopez (201) 475-4854
Treasurer	John Slaby (215) 252-1991
Membership	Ralph A. Fenner (215) 868-6459
Librarian	Chris C. Andrews (215) 866-2459
Newsletter Editor	Chris Scullion Unlisted

Library Staff

8-Bit Disks	John Douglas
16-Bit Disks	
Paper Library	Open

Meeting Set-Up

Open

Club Phone Numbers

Help Key II	(215) 759-2683
Club Hotline (Voice)	(215) 759-3336

Allentown Bethlehem Easton's
Atari Computer Enthusiasts
P.O. Box 2830
Lehigh Valley, PA 18001

San Leandro Computer Club
Newsletter Exchange
P.O.Box 1506
San Leandro, CA 94577